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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on aspects of a process of learning (participation) that emerged in a study of crosscultural experiences. As a phenomenological work, this study brings attention to the possibility that how adults learn in everyday life may actually be a process of experiencing the difference between what is familiar and known, and that which is unfamiliar and therefore unknown. The theory presented in the paper is illustrated through the comments and perceptions of an English-as-a-second-language teacher in Canada who had had long experience of other cultures. From the experiences articulated by the teacher a model was generated that depicts a process of learning proceeding in steps through observing (awareness), acting in the scene (knowing), confronting difference (understanding), and involving oneself. The involving phase of the process represents the total acquisition of knowledge, wherein the known becomes familiar and therefore no longer in the forefront of consciousness, i.e., it is taken for granted. The new known then becomes a background for new perceptions of difference and therefore new learning. The paper concludes that confrontation of difference is rewarding because it is an opportunity for learning. (KC)

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PARTICIPATION IN CROSSCULTURAL SETTINGS :

A THEORY OF LEARNING AS A PROCESS OF EXPERIENCING DIFFERENCE.

Thelma Barer - Stein, Ph.D.

Paper presented to the AAACE National Adult Education Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. November 8, 1985.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will focus on aspects of a process of learning (participation) that emerged in a study of crosscultural experiences.[1] As a phenomenological work, this study brings attention to the possibility that how adults learn in everyday life may actually be a process of experiencing difference between what is familiar and known, and that which is unfamiliar and therefore unknown.

The notion of difference itself as an independent concept for study emerged from the researcher's own lifelong interest and study of culture and crosscultural experiences.[2]

Throughout this work, culture is spoken of as expressing the many ways in which individuals group together, compose, understand and live their daily lives and in so doing, transmit a way of daily living to others.[3] Crosscultural experiences are considered to be those contacts or relationships with people from cultures other than one's own. The broadest interpretation of these two concepts alludes also to the differences that may exist between two individuals even within the same cultural context, and thus to the fact of difference itself being inherent in all aspects of human relationships and experiences. Immediately it becomes evident (from the title above) that 'participation' may be a way of learning, and that a 'crosscultural experience' may also be an experiencing of difference itself.

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Finally, it is emphasized that the purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the process of learning that emerged from this work, rather than to the analytic and interpretive process itself, to the grounds from which this was culled, or even to digress to a comparison with other learning theories extant.

THE APPROACH

Embarking with the expressed intent to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of culture, I sought information and experience from English Second Language teachers . I had reasoned that their work immersed them daily in crosscultural experiences and I felt that something important could come from in-depth interviews centering on the concern of how they had come to be E.S.L. teachers.

It was from a careful examination of four initial pilot interviews that I came to realise the differences that separated interviews from dialogues and it was this new-found understanding that set me on a course beyond the traditional research approaches commonly considered as quantitative or qualitative, into a realm of philosophical research which centres on the discovery of meaning and the surfacing of possibilities of meaning.[4]

Throughout this work, my beacon seemed to be my own persistent conviction that somewhere within an understanding of <u>how</u> crosscultural experiences are actually experienced, the embedded meanings would shed light on culture itself and thus its essence which I came to gradually see as the enigma of difference.

Two important principles directed this work :

1. to be guided by that which drew my attention
2. to subject this event to "thinking phenomenologically"[5]

But this is not a task to be undertaken and then dismissed. Once harnessed within such a realm of reflective thinking one cannot extricate oneself without deliberate effort. Husserl had long ago noted that ways of thinking become habitual and an inextricable part of oneself. He had said:

> ... that since the psychologist thinks psychologically, the logician thinks logically, thus the phenomenologist must learn to think phenomenologically!
>
> (Husserl, 1913:190)

Eventually, while working on the transcripts of five subsequent dialogues with E.S.L. teachers, I found myself drawn to focus on one participant. Even while I attempted to study the experiences of the others, her articulate expressions became like a third presence over my shoulder[6] reaching out and touching everything else I read and thought about.It was not only her experiences that drew me to Elizabeth's words, but my sense of affinity with her own practise of accounting for and reflecting upon each of these as they came to her attention.

Something else set her quite apart from the others. I had reasoned to myself that within the natural discourse of "how they had come to be E.S.L. teachers " there would be some evidence of how their cultural awareness had begun and developed for them, even as it had for me. What proved to be intriguing here, was <u>that which was not said</u>. Speaking easily of students, inspiration for classes and their own crosscultural experiences --- none of these teachers referred directly to culture as being an aspect of their work. Awareness of culture was a tacit assumption underlying all that we spoke of together. We simply took it for granted.

But Elizabeth did not. It was she who drew this taken-for-granted assumption out of its deeply layered sediment of past experiences to openly display it for critical examination and penetrating reflections. She differed

from all the others, because for her, the issue of culture itself was central. She saw these developing understandings of culture as the matrix from which both her knowledge and development of E.S.L. and her comprehension of herself were emerging. She seemed to relish this opportunity to share her thoughts and attempt to make sense of them.

While it is not possible here in this paper to reiturate the entire narration of her experiences, it is necessary to explain that throughout the dialogue we shared, she told me of her crosscultural experiences as naturally as any conversation between friends. There was no attempt to direct or shape the discourse. We simply shared a profound "urge to understand" [7] and we pursued this with unabated intensity.

I felt that I had truly entered into her experiences such that they became as real for me as they had been for her within those recollections that burst with such animation into her narrative. Her memories became my memories, her reflections joined with my own as I shared so totally in her need to understand her life. Nor having once entered this realm could I turn away. The examining of incidents in her crosscultural experiences exemplified a sequential progress of changes which she herself had been unaware of. This was not a process like directions to a place or recipes for a cake.My hermeneutic analysis and interpretation of her reflections served to gradually strip away the surface details of travel, work and ways of living, to eventually reveal an increasingly intensified participating within these experiences, and a gradual separating between them that indicated their subtle differentiations.

Throughout this work I have attempted to speak not for Elizabeth, but to speak in a way that displays how her experiences (so close to my own) stirred this analytic and interpretive movement within me.

Even now a lucid answer evades me as I try to explain for myself how all of this should be so. Who can explain the poem that must be written, or the artist's drive to create with color and form ? None seek truth nor even the flawless method by which their achievement evolves, yet each seems driven by an inner force to understand more profoundly that which exists to capture their awareness, and to give it a possibility of expression that may be shared by others. Emilio Betti has said it well :

> In fact humans get to the point of understanding one another not by exchanging material things or by setting out to produce exactly the same idea by means of some sort of exchange automatism, but rather by reciprocally putting into motion, each one of them, the same link from the chain of hisown representations or conceptions ... by touchingin each other the same string of each individual mental instrument, as if to sound a chord, so that ideas correspond to those of the one who is speaking or writing will be stimulated in the one who listens or reads.
>
> (Betti, 1984:31)

And those who do reverberate with the excitement of that intimate sharing, that immediate recognition of essence revealed and insight exposed, do so not through observing or even by acting. They achieve this union with the speaker[8] by stepping fearlessly beyond that which seems so different to come face to face with, and permit themselves to become involved .

Such a force that lures and draws the attentive mind, must also be the force of universals :(as Betti has alluded,) to those structural underpinnings on which we mount our very existence. In this way, I became aware of the possibility of the universality of a process in the matters of daily living and the human experiences that shape them each so uniquely. There had been some affinity between Elizabeth's crosscultural experiences and my own, and by stripping away the details from which they were grounded and culled, and with the questioning reflections that drew them forth, I was enabled to graphically depict the skeleton framework of those "summits of meanings."

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WHAT WAS FOUND

There is an importance to my deliberate coining of the term : summits of meaning." It is done with the express intent to differentiate from the more common display of charts exemplifying process , as the summation of findings. I am attempting to show that what is graphically depicted below represents only a portion of the complexity of the reality from which it was derived. Such depiction is presented only for clarification and easy reference, not as representing the entirety of the process.

That is why I speak of these as 'summits of meaning' , those barely visible peaks of these progressions of learning/participating that I have been exhuming analytically and exposing interpretively in order to come to the point of naming them as possibly representative of the collective attributes of each 'phase' and the internal 'moments'. I did not separate these out deliberately; they separated of their own accord because of their inherent differences. Some so subtle as to pass unnoticed by Elizabeth herself.

This notion of separating deserves clarification. I do not mean or intend here the clear separation either by crystallization or precipitation, but rather the cautious and tenuous discerning of difference as between colors that blend one into the other in subtle gradations. In this very manner, I first saw only the opulence of color representing the richness of Elizabeth's experiences. Only with concentrated effort was I able to tentatively discern that which created the gradations providing the intensity of that opulence. I mean by this effort of explication, to show that the tendency to see these phases and moments as distinct separate entities must be discarded in favor of the more realistic seeing of them as the portions of a flow of experience that are visible (but only with effort) for us to comprehend.

A PARTIAL DEPICTION OF
LEARNING AS A PROCESS OF EXPERIENCING DIFFERENCE*

↓	SEDUCTION AS ACCESS
OBSERVING (AWARENESS)	AWARENESS-OF-INTEREST OBSERVER -SPECTATOR SIGHT-SEER
↓ ACTING-IN-THE-SCENE (KNOWING)	WITNESS -APPRAISER CULTURAL-MISSIONARY CLUSTER JUDGEMENT LIVING-THE-LIFE-OF
↓ (UNDERSTANDING)	CONFRONTATION OF DIFFERENCE (SURFACE & SUBMERGED KNOWINGS) 1. passive 2. conflict 3. withdrawal 4. SHEMA (hear/heed, learn)
↓ INVOLVING ↘	INVOLVING YOURSELF PARADOX OF INVOLVEMENT
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Note : No graphic two-dimensional illustration can depict the dynamism or complexity of this process. Therefore, this is NOT to be construed as a model of the process, but only a clarification.

The depiction of Learning as a Process of Experiencing Difference represents a possibility of how an adult can learn. We do not learn what we already know, but we are drawn by our own awareness-of-interest to learn that which differs. Since this represents a process of experiencing difference, it may also represent a process of learning.

While the process as a whole revolves around and is sustained and linked by an individual AWARENESS-OF-INTEREST, it is initiated by that which lures and entices curiosity of the latent awareness-of-interest : the SEDUCTIVE ACCESS. That is to say, one cannot be drawn to an interest unless there already exists a sliver of awareness.Some awareness-of interest may lie seemingly dormant until a need awakens it; sometimes it is stirred by the more persistent notion of the "urge to understand". For example, in this study of Elizabeth, her own words "I wanted to be a part of it" indicated not only her awareness-of-interest in differing cultures, but also her excitement and enjoyment of a differing language :

> I loved their culture in many ways and found it very seductive. Very exciting. I wanted to be part of it. I loved it. It was very exciting to be part of it. And move into it. And being accepted. ...I guess Mexicans are looser and warmer than Canadians. There's more to it than that. It is an easy surface graciousness that makes it easy for them to express the warmth they have. That I admire and I like. I'd like to be able to do that. I'd like to be able to talk like that. I'd like to be like that sometimes.

OBSERVING :

But awareness proved to be the inner expression of the first 'phase' of OBSERVING, which encompassed the subtler shifts from AWARENESS-OF-INTEREST to OBSERVER-SPECTATOR and eventually to SIGHT-SEER. These are distinguished from each other, in that the moment of observer-spectator represent one's observations as an outsider, a bystander or a mere spectator of a scene from which one is quite apart. I wondered how really neutral one is in any scene that one is merely observing. Surely the fact of attentiveness to that which is being observed, in itself depicts some latent interest that moves one beyond neutral emotionless seeing.The moment of sight-seer represents a shift from the stance of casually observing that which chances across one's attention to now adding a deliberateness to the quality of observing as one

who seeks out points of interest.

ACTING-IN-THE-SCENE :

The second phase of ACTING-IN-THE-SCENE , encompassing the moments depicted as WITNESS-APPRAISER, CULTURAL MISSIONARY, CLUSTER JUDGEMENT, and LIVING-THE-LIFE-OF now depict a distinct shift . In the example of Elizabeth, this phase now represented that she was no longer the outside observer looking in on a scene; this time she begins depicting herself actually within the scene and participating in some way.What seems important to me here is not so much the description, but rather the gently insistent shift from being outside of a scene to stepping inside, even to become just a small part of it. She had somehow found a way to get a little closer to that which interested her.

Speaking of her sojourn in England and working in a "classy department store", Elizabeth was saying :

> I worked there at Christmas and people were most anxious that their turkeys get to their homes and that their gifts be delivered on time...Well I worried about that more than anyone else in the store as far as I could tell... after the third complaint about a turkey I went right down on the loading dock and I can remember I was practically stamping my feet in frustrationand anger insisting on getting that turkey out and the man who was the head of the loading dock told me why didn't I just relax and have a cup of tea... Well it was after that I started to notice they were far more relaxed over that sort of thing than I was...I was the one who was all keen on efficiency, not the British! Not the people in the store.
>
> (emphasis is mine)

In this very stating that she had 'started to notice', she had made a shift from sight-seer to witness. There was now in her narration not only the deliberate focused watchfulness of the sight-seer, but more importantly there now emerged an awareness of her own watchfulness. She was now fully present within the scene, not only acting within the situation, but also reacting to her own presence. Her way of making sense of these differences she was confronting

(confronting as a coming face to face with something) was to compare what she witnessed with what she already knew : British ways versus Canadian ways. The process of appraising by making comparisons assumes the use of previously acquired knowledge in order that evaluations, judgements and criticisms may be entertained.[9] Now I could see that as Elizabeth moved closer to the objects of her interest, she became more analytical and appraising in her reflections.

And within my own interpretive process a parallel shift was also taking place. In being drawn to understand Elizabeth's movements within her reflections, I , myself was moving deeper , becoming analytically and interpretively a witness-appraiser within her scene! Within such proximity, the only means we each had to make sense of that which spread before us --- cultural differences --- was to first of all present our own images with clarity in apposition to that which confronted us. We were only aware of cultural difference, difference itself, because it differed from what we already knew of ourselves. It seemed to follow that in the degree to which we could appraise ourselves, to that degree we were capable of appraising others.

Elizabeth's work with the Children's Aid Society back in Canada evoked yet another shift to the moment of CULTURAL-MISSIONARY. This involved "to want to do something" which differed markedly from the previous role of appraising.

> I wanted the children in my care to get a good reputation.... I wanted them to have my manners. I saw my standards as being universal. And that those middle class ways were good and right and just and the way. And there I was, teaching the way to the Children's Aid children too.
>
> (emphasis is hers)

Even though these children were Canadian, she overcame her initial shock at their difference (from herself) by deciding that it was they not she who

did not fit Canadian criteria. Therefore, they would have to change, and she would help them to become more like herself, the quintessential Canadian. From other expressions within her narrative, I was able to draw out these characteristics as being encompassed within cultural missionary:

> -a clear sense of differentiation between one's own culture and that of others
>
> -the conviction of the rightness of onr's own culture
>
> -the twofold capacity that enables one to see no fault with one's own culture and thus its appropriateness for all others, and at the same time the unquestioned assumption that others need or want this "right way"
>
> -the conviction that those who did not share her culture had nothing : "better with mine than none at all"
>
> -her charitable desire to share this culture with others less fortunate

And yet throughout her work with the Children's Aid, small twinges over her own ineffectuality with the children began to worry her. She spoke with her supervisor to determine if perhaps she had been tactless in driving to visit her young clients in her new car.

> But all he said, and here's someone who obviously knew more than I did at that time , he said, "They see us as creatures from Mars a lot of the time and they don't don't know enough about our lives. The fact that we have a car at all sets us apart. The fact that we have fulltime jobs and have an education and earn a steady income sets us so apart from them that they don't make a differentiation between nice car, beat-up car"....He just thought we are <u>so different , they just think we are all alike</u>.
>
> (emphasis is mine)

This inability to see others and other lifestyles without individual differentiation, as well as the assessing of others as a group instead of on an individual basis seemed to me to be yet another facet of the cultural-missionary and I named this moment : CLUSTER-JUDGEMENT.

At this point in my interpretive analysis of Elizabeth's narration, I had wanted to understand something of the effect of these crosscultural experiences on her E.S.L. teaching.

Me: Do you consciously draw on any of these experiences ?

> Not consciously, no. I went to Mexico first as a tourist and then I returned to marry a Mexican. And until I married a Mexican and until I lived the life of a Mexican housewife, I guess I didn't really think there was such a thing as cultural differences.
> I would never have... I would have said yes, the Germans have their beer and the Italians like their spagetti and I knew, oh I knew all that. I travelled. And because I travelled I deluded myself into thinking that I knew something of foreign places. (long pause) In fact, I knew nothing at all.
>
> (emphasis is hers)

For Elizabeth, the distinction between what was real and what was implied, was a crucial one. She had always noted cultural differences and her travel stories had been replete with such examples. But they had been for her just that: stories of cultural differences. They had not been real because she had never been able to accept them as a reality.If travel and observation could not glean cultural knowledge, then what was different in "living-the-life-of"? In fact, "I knew nothing at all " really meant that all her previous cross-cultural experiences had not served to prepare her for whatever it was that happened in Mexico. This must have been an experience totally different from anything she had known in the past and I need to know how it differed.

In all the previous shifts that I had been able to differentiate (although Elizabeth had lumped them all together as "tourist-transient"), there had been no tangible ties that bound her either in permanence or in reality. It had all been a temporary seeing and acting.It seemed to me that she had temporarily lent herself to each scene and gone along with the actions of each situation. She had been a party to the events around her, but neither she nor they had been changed by her presence.

What set living-the-life-of apart from the other shifts still within the acting phase, was the persistent belief expressed by Elizabeth that she was now really involved in Mexican life and community.It was not until the next incident exploded forth in her narrative that I came to realise that the depth of her own conviction had convinced her that living-the-life-of was the same as "involving yourself". But there was an immense and important difference.

CONFRONTATION OF DIFFERENCE :

Separated out in the framework depicted graphically above, is a section of the process named CONFRONTATION OF DIFFERENCE. Throughout this work, the notion of 'confrontation' is taken to mean a coming face to face with something.I am mindful of the usual negative connotation to this term, and yet I feel that its essential meaning which suggests a standing-in-front-of expresses precisely the closeness and sudden silent realization of the unknown that occurs when two differing entities face each other fully and really see each other fully. It is rare to confront that which is known and familiar.[10] Face to face and in direct full view of my attention is what I mean by confront. So crucial was the outcome of the confrontation of difference, that it could determine whether or not involvement would occur.

I did not gain an immediate insight into this segment, but it fell together rounded out with meaning as many parts began to make sense.I was to find that the "silent realization of the unknown" was really a reflective pause encompassing at least three sets of interpretive practices:

1. collecting information
2. questioning that which collected
3. comparing with what was previously known

At some point within the process of questioning, as comparisons begin to enter between what is known and what is not known, the shadow of the entering

'unknowns' may herald the sense of difference itself.That is to say that it is only following these three possible interpretive practices that the notion of difference itself can be entertainedWithout the exercise of these, only a PASSIVE CONFRONTATION can result. That is, the coming face-to-face, lacking an awareness-of-interest in that which one if facing, dissolves into a meeting-and-passing or we may speak of an 'encounter' rather than a confronting.

The second mode of handling confrontation was familiar : that of conflict. But this did not enter this study. The third mode or possibility was depicted by Elizabeth herself, when, after an explosive outburst with her Mexican husband during which neither was capable of assessing and understanding the reality of the other because each was attempting to do so from the bedrock of their differing cultures, Elizabeth WITHDREW.

Previously in our discourse, it had been Elizabeth herself who had introduced the notion of INVOLVEMENT as something you had to do yourself, but she had been unable to open that door of involvement and move in. Living-the-life-of had been merely a knocking on that door. Yet I kept in mind that one does not knock unless one wishes to enter.Neither she nor her husband could explain or reveal to each other their own cultural underpinnings --- the taken-for-granted meanings so crucial to understanding the reality of each other's culture, and neither side could relinquish or negotiate that which they could not express.[11] Thus, in Elizabeth's own words :

> I just stopped. I had a kind of paranoia and hostility towards all Mexicans.I just didn't learn or progress anymore. I refused to learn anymore.

But if this CONFRONTATION OF DIFFERENCE could only be met with passivity, conflict or withdrawal, how then could one gain the needed knowledge to move into what now clearly arose as the third distinct phase : INVOLVING ?

Like the concept of reality [12], it now seemed to me that it was an entity in the way that AWARENESS, KNOWING and UNDERSTANDING must be. Each capable of being caught in my awareness-of-interest and moving through a process of progressive, sequential and cumulative moments.

Now a new clarity of both notions : awareness and reality clamor for interpretation. From the outset, I could see now that awareness was only part of the notion. It was really always an awareness of something. That is to say, awareness can never exist alone but must always exhibit intent : awareness-of-interest. It is precisely this that sparked my "urge to understand". for such only prompts and nudges its way to my conscious awareness precisely because it is an interest. Throughout this entire process, it is the spark from the awareness-of-interest that ignites the urge to understand that in turn unceasingly provides the powerful thrust to link each moment of the process, one with the other in a progression of AWARENESS, KNOWING and then UNDERSTANDING.

There is something more that dwells within and now presses to be seen. To speak of someone being aware is usually to intimate that they already have knowledge; yet here in this phenomenological work, I have suggested that awareness is a precursor to knowing. It is almost to say that common usage of 'aware' bespeaks the position of involvement-in-something-so -that-one-already-knows-it. My speaking of awareness is almost as of a primordial attention and I am drawn now to pull forth from my recollections my very early learning of Torah interpretations which began with an attempt to understand the most central prayer in Judaism, the SHEMA. Simply translated into English :

Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

But the first word, in Hebrew SHEMA extrapolated so simplistically into 'hear' bespeaks and extends far into traditions of the culture of the past and far into the traditions of the future. For Hebrew scholars interpret SHEMA as meaning 'to heed'[13] since in hearing one hears the sounds with the ears, but 'sees' their meaning through the reflections of the mind and subsequently into the conduct of one's life by heeding through the volitional exercise of one's will. This prayer is not a commandment, but a prayer intended to be encompassed with meditative reflection and interpreted into ethical living. It is intended to bespeak the whole of Judaic tradition that follows it : a volitional doing while being mindful-of. Bringing this now expanded understanding of awareness-of-interest, I can see that a crucial part if not the essence of it, is this Judaic interpretation of 'hear-heed'. Lacking the hear-heed of the SHEMA, there can be no knowing at all and without knowing there can be no understanding.

It appeared then, that in facing that which differed, four choices existed :

1. to meet and pass (passive confrontation)
2. to engage in conflict
3. to withdraw into oneself
4. to engage oneself by "SHEMA", heeding and thereby knowing, understanding and learning further.

Only the first choice was a passive one, the other three required some form of action, but only the fourth was positive. In further work within Elizabeth's discourse, I was to discover that Elizabeth herself persisted until she had exhumed yet another way of handling confrontation of difference (other than her earlier withdrawal), which she described as being "bicultural". Through her work with E.S.L. classes after her return to Canada from Mexico, she learned from her students that "they feel like two selves", "an addition to their lives , not a deprivation". In other words, these persons, moving through a

process that was now apparent also to Elizabeth, had found the fourth choice that was neither the closure represented by conflict (a closure to the knowing of others) nor the closure of self to others : withdrawal. This choice represented the opening of oneself to that which differed , permitting the possibility of the SHEMA and thus the necessary conditions for the enhancement of self that was learning.

> (Elizabeth sighed and her voice grew soft)
>
> But you gotta get through the process to get to that part, and I didn't get through the process.

It was in more fully grasping an understanding of what was required (real understanding) to progress to INVOLVING YOURSELF, that I was now able to depict more clearly the phase of acting as :

> Acting-within-the-scene actually represents a type of experiencing that lacks present committment, ongoing concern, and that doesn't require any rootedness in the past. It provides a means to appear to be participating/experiencing (to oneself and usually to others) without actually becoming involved.

INVOLVING YOURSELF :

And while it was Elizabeth herself who had tried to understand how it was that living-the-life-of was clearly still in the acting phase and not really INVOLVING YOURSELF, (of course she had no notion of phases, these arose in my later interpretations), it was out of my understanding of ACTING that I clearly expressed INVOLVING YOURSELF :

> Involvement was not something that was done to you, nor even something that someone else could do for you. Involvement seemed to step beyond mere participation/experiencing with the superficial and the temporary. It was representative of a deliberately willful movement not just towards, but actually within something, connoting almost inextricable connectedness.

But at this point of clarification , I realized something that I had not noted previously. There was a paradox here : Elizabeth was explaining the dissolution of the 'wall'of confrontation through her own realization that becoming bicultural was a new awareness, a new learning and thus an enhancement

of the self and yet it seemed that she had not applied this as being meaningful to her self. I had some difficulty understanding this and turned again to the pages of transcripts recording our taped dialogue, where she had now abruptly turned to speaking of her E.S.L. classes.Now I began to see that involvement itself seemed to hold within it a paradox of familiarity: the more profound the involvement, the more deeply submerged those earlier awarenesses become. Her familiarity with her own cultural traditions and the transmitting of these to her students had submerged her knowledge of them as they sank into the realm of the taken-for-granted or "moved to the back seat of her awareness"[14]. Something that is worn smooth with familiarity does not engage awareness as that which is new, different and therefore unfamiliar.

This was a critical realization for me : for this implied that to be truly involved would be to take something for granted. This is like saying : the better you know something the less you are aware of knowing it. Early in the process of my own learning within this work of inquiry, I had spoken of the realm of the taken-for-granted as being "SUBMERGED KNOWLEDGE"[15] and that the gentle process of submergence from "front-row awareness of interest to the dimly-seen back row (of the arena of our knowledge) where assumptions rest, scarcely real but a part of all the experience nonetheless" as a metaphor seemed more suitable now than ever, as I realized that what lay behind this shifting of "seats" was the appearance or presence of a new awareness-of-interest appearing within our limited consciousness for "front-row seating" ! The notion of a limitation to front-row awareness would have to await another reflective opportunity.

Elizabeth's awareness-of-interest of cultural difference had been unseated by her newly-appearing awareness-of-interestthat now focused on

E.S.L. learners rather than her own pursuit of learning. But it was a transposing of content and not really of process. Without her conscious awareness, she had in fact "gotten through the process" and immediately, or better to say, concurrently with that learning had chosen to direct the new-found learning towards guiding others through that very process.

And now with the sense of calm that always accompanies the reality of understanding, I knew that what had drawn me to converse with enthusiastic and committed E.S.L. teachers in the first place, and to have singled out Elizabeth from all the others was the clarity of her articulations that served as my beacon.

I knew something else. So long as Elizabeth could hold, even gently, her awareness-of-interest in her own process of experiencigg difference, she would always be sharing that awareness with her E.S.L. learners. Therein lay the key to her committment -- INVOLVING HERSELF. But I felt sure that she already understood all of this and for her it was just taken for granted as she concluded :

> I think there is a quality about the mind, a willingness to move into a different way of seeing. A willingness to understand another point of view, at least to entertain it, to listen....

EPILOGUE

In the traditional sense, the epilogue provides the speaker's closure to a play just as the "conclusions" represent the researcher's summation of findings. But this is not a play nor a traditional research report. This is a reflective inquiry which can never be closed or concluded, for each reflection and each ensuing question entices as awareness-of-

interest from each who has shared as reader or listener.Thus in a sense, a response is demanded. And each response has the potential to touch and to bring to quivering awareness that seed in yet another person with differing experiences. This is how the enrichment of learning expands.There is no end. There can be no end to learning.

I feel assured now that further reflections on anything that differs or is unfamiliar will be a rewarding confrontation. But this can only happen when I am enabled to see that the confronting of a difference is in reality the confronting of an opportunity to open myself to it and the opportunity for it to express meaning for me. Perhaps too, there is within this an element of faith in the unlimited resource available to each of us as human beings : our own minds and our voice that can reveal its profound workings.

NOTES

1. This paper focuses on only one aspect of the original work :
Barer-Stein, Thelma. "Learning as a Process of Experiencing Difference". Ph.D. dissertation, OISE, The University of Toronto, 1985.

2.For example :
Barer-Stein, Thelma. You Eat What You Are : A Study of Ethnic Food Traditions. Toronto : McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1979. Third printing.

3. Re definitions of culture, I refer the reader to the more classical (anthropological) definitions as found in Kroeber, 1963; Landes, 1965; Montague, 1969; Eliot, 1962; Linton, 1964; Bohannan, 1972 and Langness , 1974. But I also wish to draw the reader's attention to : Palmer (1969:176-177) in speaking of Gadamer's concept of "historicality" note that :

> ... the present is seen and understood only through the intentions, ways of seeing and preconceptions bequethed from the past...the past is not like a pile of facts which can be made an object of the consciousness, but rather a stream in which we move and participate, in every act of understanding. Tradition then, is not something in which we stand and through which we exist; for the most part it is so transparent a medium that it is invisible to us --- as invisible as water to a fish.

This proves to be aninteresting way of expanding the notion of culture being something we usually assume knowledge of and thereby take for granted.

4.I offer as reference just a few of the many phenomenological philosophers such as Zaner, Spiegelberg, Farber, Curtis and May and most especially the father of phenomenology : Edmund Husserl whose early work Ideas published in 1913, provided the firmest foundation of all.I must also add a few of the hermeneutic philosophers whose 'friendship I gained towards the end of my Thesis writing : Palmer, Gadamer and Rorty.

5. Only now can I really grasp why it is that a definition of phenomenological thinking is so rare. This is because phenomenology is NOT a body of knowledge to be memorized, nor a method to be followed,. Essentially it is a way of thinking and a way of expressing what has taken place , both the process and the content of that thinking. It is for each person to seek and to develop a way that works.

6. Two excerpts serve to emphasize and enhance my own expression here.

> The experience of the 'Thou' also manifests the paradoxical element that SOMETHING STANDING OVER AGAINST ME ASSERTS ITS OWN RIGHTS AND REQUIRES ABSOLUTE RECOGNITION: and in that very process is understood.
>
> (emphasis is mine)
>
> (Gadamer, 1979.)

> ...the fundamental concept : that no interpretation can arise without a representational form... and the qualification of representational function is to be understood in the sense that ANOTHER MIND DIFFERENT FROM OURSAND NONETHELESS INTIMATELY LINKED WITH OURS MAKES ITSELF RECOGNIZABLE to us through this form and calling upon our sensibility and intelligence.
>
> (emphasis is mine)
> (Betti, 1984:30)

7. The characteristic structure of all our personal knowledge comes out even more vividly when we realize that all knowing is action ---that it is OUR URGE TO UNDERSTAND and control our experience...

(emphasis is mine)
(Polanyi and Prosch,1975:42)

8. Important differentiation of 'speaking' and'reciting' may be found in Gadamer, 1975:497-8 where he notes that speaking "runs the risk of positing something and following out the implication" whereas "Recitation knows what is coming and is closed to the sudden idea". Following from these thoughts, I realize that often a part of a actor's greatness lies in his/her ability to make us feel that the spoken words were just formed.

9. About the expression of 'appraiser', I have noted that Polyani (1975:43) in discussing the aspects of personal knowingsees a role of appraiser as essential quality of knowing.

10. I speak mostly in this paper and in the Thesis from which it originated, of 'confronting difference' or 'that which differs' , and only later was I to read Schutz' (1973:190) regarding the fact that it is the 'unfamiliar' which catches our attention : " as a consequence of its unfamiliarity which was brought into relief opposite the familiar field." Also Gadamer (1975:237) refers to difference as the "experience of being brought up short".

11. This whole notion of underlying structures, or 'underpinnings' is presented in greater detail and expansion in the original dissertation.

12. I begin to feel now that I have casually dropped several complex concepts in this paper that are treated with great depth in my original dissertation and the reader may feel there are gaps. For example the whole notion of 'reality' is spread out for careful analytic interpretation that ends with : "Reality was actually whatever one believed it to be at the time."

13. Husserl (1913:119-122) in speaking about the cogito , states that its essence is always a "consciousness of something" and in explaining this further, notes that this in turn implies " a turning towards a thing ...an apprehending and a heeding." Previously in the same work he refers to the cogito as implying "all that one knows".

14. This is yet another example of a concept treated with greater depth in the original dissertation (page 106) that must be necessarily curtailed here.

15. I have coined the term SUBMERGED KNOWLEDGE as opposed from SURFACE KNOWLEDGE. This notion is supported by Gadamer (1975:12) by his inference that "nothing disappears but everything is preserved, and is close to Polyani's "tacit knowing" but differs in that Polyani speaks of "a meaning that has been wiped out" whereas, for me, a wiping out would connote permanent removal while submergence is more akin to Heidegger's temporarily "hidden". More similar to my own representation is Schutz's (1973:176) conception of "negative knowledge as consisting of restorable and attainable knowledge."

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